



Steering Committee Draft - Committee Meeting Summary

April 5, 2001

The following is a summary of presentations given, issues raised, actions undertaken or recommendations made. When possible, lengthy discussions have been summarized into themes or summary statements.

Steering Committee Members Present:

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|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Peter Beaulieu
PSRC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sandra Meyer
City of Renton | <input type="checkbox"/> Jeanette Mar
FHWA |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Leonard
FHWA | <input type="checkbox"/> Mick Monken
City of Woodinville | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bernard Van deKamp
City of Bellevue |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brian O'Sullivan
Sound Transit | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill Barlow
Community Transit | <input type="checkbox"/> Marvin Vialle
WA Dept. of Ecology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jonathan Friedman
U.S. EPA | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Terra Hegy
WA Fish & Wildlife | <input type="checkbox"/> Don Cairns
City of Redmond |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jim Arndt
City of Kirkland | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Johannes Kurz
Snohomish County | <input type="checkbox"/> Eddie Low
City of Bothell |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Nancy Brennan-Dubbs
U.S. Fish & Wildlife | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ann Martin
King County | <input type="checkbox"/> John Witmer
FTA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dan Drais
FTA | <input type="checkbox"/> Kim Becklund
City of Bellevue | <input type="checkbox"/> Seyed Safavian
City of Bothell |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mitch Wasserman
City of Clyde Hill | <input type="checkbox"/> Bob Sokol
City of Kenmore | <input type="checkbox"/> Don Wickstrom
City of Kent |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bill Vlcek
City of Lynnwood | <input type="checkbox"/> Debra Symmonds
City of Mercer Island | <input type="checkbox"/> Kevin Gross
City of Newcastle |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sandra Manning
WA Dept. of Ecology | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharon Griffin
Hunts Point | <input type="checkbox"/> Jim Morrow
City of Tukwila |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dan Burke
Port of Seattle | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Paul Carr
PSCAA | <input type="checkbox"/> Barbara Gilliland
Sound Transit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chuck Chappell
FHWA | <input type="checkbox"/> Phil Fordyce
WSDOT | <input type="checkbox"/> Jack Kennedy
U.S. Army Corps |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Gibbons
NMFS | <input type="checkbox"/> Allyson Brooks
WA Dept. CT&E | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Leonard Newstrum
Yarrow Point |

Staff and Observers

Judith Lee (for Jonathan Friedman)

Corrine Hensley (Little Br. Crk. Prot. Assn.)

Project Management Team

Mike Cummings, WSDOT

Don Samdahl, Mirai Associates

Ron Anderson, DEA

Cathy Hood, PRR

Carol Hunter, WSDOT

Paul Bergman, PRR

Brian O'Sullivan, Sound Transit

Keith McGowan, McGowan Environmental

CALL TO ORDER

Michael Cummings, WSDOT, called the meeting to order at 1:35 PM. New committee members were introduced.

- Judith Lee, EPA, announced that Jonathan Friedman would be the new representative from EPA. He will be replacing Rick Parkin on the I-405 project. She was attending today's meeting in the absence of Mr. Friedman.
- Dan Burke from the Port of Seattle will be attending the Steering Committee.

Mr. Cummings reviewed the focus of today's meeting.

- Update on Program Status and Schedule
- Review EIS Status & Schedule
- Update on Legislative Activities
- Public Involvement Feedback
- Preliminary Preferred Alternative Refinements

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Program Update

Mr. Cummings reviewed the upcoming meeting schedule. The Steering Committee will meet again on May 16 and June 12 at the Kirkland City Hall. The July 28th meeting is of significance, as the program team will be developing the recommendation on the preferred alternative (PA).

Mr. Cummings recapped the brown bag meetings held in February and March. The February 27th meeting on managed lanes was met with "vocal opposition and silent support." Over one hundred people, including good representation from the Steering Committee and the Trans-Lake group, attended the March 12th meeting. Ann Martin, King County, said that she thought that a strong point made by attendees was on the subject of the feasibility of convertibility (from bus to rail). Johannes Kurz, Snohomish County, added that this meeting made clear the fact that bus rapid transit would be more effective for incremental implementation. Thirty plus people attended the March 28th brown bag, and positive feedback was received.

The committees are currently in the Draft EIS Phase of the I-405 Program. It includes a number of public involvement events (open houses and hearings). They anticipate that the Draft EIS will be issued in June, and the next key target date is in August when the Final EIS will be issued and a decision on the PA is expected.

Mr. Cummings reviewed some of the recent Speakers Bureau engagements. Among the planned visits are the League of Women Voters, 1000 Friends of Washington, and a Renton Open House. He encouraged other jurisdictions to sponsor their own open houses similar to the one Renton is sponsoring. In addition to the Speaker Bureau, they will hold three public hearings during mid-July 16, 17, 18. These hearings will be held at locations along the North, Middle, and South areas of the corridor.

A new feature on the program web site is a Community Feedback page where correspondence will be stored. Currently, a letter received from the Kenndale Neighborhood Association has been posted on the site. This organization expressed concern over use of the Burlington Northern R/W (BNSF). Sandra Meyer, City of Renton, noted that the community adamantly opposes use of this R/W for rail (other than the current use), and they are launching a very aggressive campaign, which includes a letter to George Kargianis. A member noted that the Bellevue Downtown Association supports Alternative 3 and will provide a letter. The project management team will work on responses to these comments. The jurisdiction and agency letters will all be posted and then summarized at committee meetings.

Mr. Cummings reviewed the EIS status and schedule. The Preliminary Draft Environmental Impact Statement (PDEIS) will be distributed on April 10th. It will also be available electronically

except for the maps. Comments are due April 20th at 10:00 AM, and it is important they be received in the format provided to the committees. The program co-leads, Sound Transit, Washington State Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and King County, will review comments. They may also meet with various agencies on May 7 if further response is required.

Legislative Update

Mr. Cummings provided an update on Legislative activity. Three bills based on the Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations are moving forward:

- 1) Design Build - This bill would give WSDOT the go-ahead to pursue design build projects rather than them being demonstration projects. Johannes Kurz asked if the private sector would be in charge of environmental aspects of projects in this scenario. Mr. Cummings replied that this was possible. He added that the higher the risk the contractor takes on the higher the cost
- 2) Permit Stream Lining – This bill would improve the current permit process. Sandra Manning, Dept. of Ecology, noted that there are three versions of this bill from the Senate, House Democrats, and House Republicans. A 15-person committee has been organized to work on the general streamlining. Among the issues they will address is the involvement of the public, agencies, and local government authorities. Mr. Cummings said I-405, Trans-Lake, and a Spokane Freeway project may be used as pilot projects. Ms. Manning said the initial focus would be on aquatic permits.
- 3) New Responsibilities for the WTC – Mr. Cummings said current proposals have the WTC being an oversight committee

Two Regionalism bills are also progressing through the Legislature. These bills look at local taxation for projects of I-405's magnitude. The bills are joint-authored and have two approaches:

- 1) Roadway
- 2) Multi-modal

Bill Barlow, Community Transit, asked if they were competing or complementary. This was not known. Bernard vandeKamp, City of Bellevue, added that there were several similar bills floating around.

Mr. Cummings said that a local vote may occur as early as this year, and this could have implications on the I-405 Program schedule. Ann Martin asked for clarification on the multi-modal bill. A member explained that the roadway approach funds roads only, and the multi-modal approach funds both roads and transit. The argument against the latter approach is that transit has its own funding source and does not need state assistance.

Summary of Feedback from Public Involvement Activities

Paul Bergman, PRR, summarized the public involvement objectives and activities carried out in 2001. The objectives were to obtain project visibility, inform the public, and obtain input. The activities included a newsletter, two public open houses, an updated website, a public opinion survey, meeting with editorial boards from the Eastside Journal and the Seattle Times, media kits, and comment form.

Mr. Bergman allowed the members to review a binder of comments received from the newsletter comment form. He also talked about the open houses. Sandra Meyer noted her surprise over the moderate open house attendance. Johannes Kurz responded that most people are interested in their specific area and not the broad program. Mr. Bergman said that the general feedback from all of the public involvement activities was the slight favoring of Alternative 3 over Alternative 2.

Mr. Bergman summarized the methodology and key findings from the public opinion telephone survey. The survey was conducted such that the corridor was divided into three regions: north, south, and central. Using census data, a representative population was questioned so that the survey would be statistically valid. The results were presented as mean scores to emphasize the

variance. He said that cumulative percentages could also be made available upon request. The key findings of the public opinion survey were:

- Transportation issues are somewhat or very serious.
- The respondents thought the biggest congestion problems were in the region they lived in.
- The public thought the economy is being adversely affected by congestion and a solution needs to be found, new funding is needed, and new traffic lanes and an HCT (characterized as rail) system should be part of the solution.
- The public did not think new lanes should be paid for by those who use them, that people should get used to the congestion, nor that a transportation solution would hurt the environment.
- The respondents strongly supported trip reduction strategies and expanding bus service.
- There was support for adding more lanes and an HCT system.
- There was little support for tolls and widening neighborhood streets.

Upon request, the data may be broken up into jurisdictions and demographics. These results will also be released to the press.

Preliminary Preferred Alternative Refinements

Don Samdahl reviewed the integrated solution for the preliminary preferred alternative, also known as Core Alternative #3 Mixed Mode. It includes transit, 4 GP lanes, HCT options for cross-lake travel, SR167 exchange improvements and lane additions, basic TDM package, money for TDM incentives. It does not include the pricing components. It does preserve a future option for HCT on the BNSF and explores the managed lane option. Leonard Newstrum, Yarrow Point, asked for an "official version" of the integrated solution package. Mr. Samdahl said that a 4 - 5 page recommendation from the Executive Committee was sent to all members.

Mr. Samdahl asked to committee members to let the program team know what they have heard so far from their jurisdictions and the public. Terry Hegy, WA Fish and Wildlife, questioned the managed lane concept. Mr. Cummings said they were looking at managed lanes in general including HOT lanes, and access control. The team is also investigating arterials with nominal limits ½ mile each side of I-405, and they should have more detail through an operational model.

Johannes Kurz said the real challenge would be the express lanes (Alternative 4) coming off I-405. Bill Barlow asked if any stacking was required, and Mr. Samdahl said the public wants the project to stay within existing R/W. Leonard Newstrum said the PPA does not specify stacking, yet he saw this as mitigation.

Other issues the program team has heard was to clarify contents of the TDM package, to address freight & ITS (i.e. truck staging area, possibly using park and ride facilities, specified locations), to clarify the environmental mitigation and enhancement aspects (i.e. noise effects, lids as opposed to stacking), and to discuss the implementation plan. Mr. Cummings said they are working with Trans-Lake to develop a common response on the lids question. Additional issues the team has heard include refinement of the bus rapid transit service concept, flexibility on alignments, specific HOV access points, definition of the central core, hours of bus service, and neighborhood strategies. The BNSF issue has stimulated the latter discussion.

Mr. Samdahl provided a definition of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). It is a flexible form of rapid transit that uses rubber tired vehicles, transit stations, a BRT R/W, an ITS element, and incremental implementation. He presented the operating concept, service concept, service patterns, service characteristics, possible transit centers (Lynnwood and Bellevue, which were used for the development of Alternative 3), and potential interface with Trans-Lake. He said more details and a BRT presentation (March 12 workshop) from Sound Transit is on the 405 website. Johannes Kurz said acquisition of the BNSF seems to be a wise economic decision since it can be sold for a profit if it is ultimately not used.

Brian O'Sullivan, Sound Transit, discussed concerns in tying two HCTs [Trans-Lake and I-405] together. He said that both studies understand the responsibility of each on potential alignments, yet they have different levels of effort. Mr. Cummings added that the purpose of this study was to make mode distribution decisions, but no technology decisions.

Mr. Samdahl refocused the discussion on defining the "Core Eastside" HCT area. Terra Hegy thought Mercer Island should not be part of the core. Anne Martin said an issue is how far to go east and south. Mr. Cummings said the current proposal involves access at Eastgate. A member asked why the core does not include Renton, and Mr. Cummings responded that ridership is low, and the focus is on east/west travel.

A member asked if any decisions on the EIS activity preclude some of the options. Mr. Cummings explained that the level of decision on the PPA is system wide. They have been meeting with jurisdictions on a community level. This program does not get into a project level analysis or decisions. They will hand off this program for project level developments.

Ann Martin asked what happens if they get through all of the multi-modal planning but Sound Transit votes against light rail. It was noted that the only good track record for a passing ballot is on transit (as compared to the road ballots). Others said that they might need to get to a project level so people are comfortable with a vote. Sandra Meyer provided an example that if the specific project was rail on the BNSF, the neighborhoods work to get that off the table, but options would be easier to sell.

Mr. Cummings said they would continue discussions on strategies for implementation. He reminded the members that the program was on a fast track, and asked they let the team know about issues from the public.

Adjournment

Michael Cummings adjourned at 4:05 PM.